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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord God Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, we praise You that You have not left us solely to our own resources. Instead, You promised to be our strength, our ever-present help in time of trouble.

Lord, our lawmakers need You during these challenging days. Guide them with Your wisdom, as Your loving providence prepares the road ahead. Give them the grace to be valiant pilgrims of life's sometimes dreary and dusty way. Teach them to toil and ask not for reward save that of knowing they do the things that please You. May the spur of conscience be the guiding star to lead them to the right decisions. Strengthen their will to always choose that which is morally excellent rather than what is politically expedient.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 20, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BURRIS thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, there will be a period of morning business for 90 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for 10 minutes each. The majority will control the first 45 minutes and the Republicans will control the second part of that.

Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 2892, which is the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act. There will be 3 hours 15 minutes for debate prior to a vote on the conference report. The Senate will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m. today for our weekly caucus lunches. If all time is used, the vote will occur around 4:30. However, some of the debate time may be yielded back and we could vote earlier than that.

We are still working on an agreement, the Republican leader and myself, to consider the Medicare Physicians Fairness Act. Senators will be notified when any agreement is reached.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE WEEK XIV, DAY II

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, over the past few months, I have delivered a series of floor speeches on the kinds of commonsense reforms that Americans were looking for but have not seen in the ongoing debate over health care. In particular, I have noted the glaring absence of medical liability reform in the various Democratic plans that are kicking around here on Capitol Hill.

My point has been simple: Throughout the debate, the administration has been hauling out one group or another onto the White House lawn as a way of suggesting support for its health care plans. We have seen doctors. We have seen nurses. We have seen hospitals, State governments—you name it. But one group you have not seen is the personal injury lawyers who drive up the cost of medicine and premiums for all of us by filing wasteful lawsuits against doctors and hospitals all across our country.

The connection between lawsuits and higher health care costs is obvious. Because of the constant threat of these suits, doctors are forced to order costly but unnecessary tests and procedures to protect themselves. The routine nature of this so-called defensive medicine is one reason health care costs

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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